IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Original) A method of communicating with a shared imaging apparatus connected to a computer network, wherein communication over said network is facilitated through use of network packets, said method comprising the steps of:

providing said shared imaging apparatus with networking hardware;

providing said shared imaging apparatus with imaging apparatus firmware;

defining a data channel associated with said networking hardware;

instructing said networking hardware to accept information on said data channel from a user that owns said data channel;

processing automatic Internet Protocol (IP) address negotiation network packets with said imaging apparatus firmware when said data channel is not owned; and

processing second types of network packets, different from said automatic IP address negotiation network packets, by said networking hardware of said shared imaging apparatus when said data channel is owned.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of processing automatic IP address negotiation network packets includes at least one of constructing, sending and receiving said automatic IP address negotiation network packets.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein when said data channel is not owned, then determining whether to place said shared imaging apparatus in an automatic IP address negotiation state, and if said shared imaging apparatus is placed in said automatic IP address negotiation state, then attempting to automatically assign an IP address to said shared imaging apparatus.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein said IP address is assigned automatically using a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP).

15. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said automatic IP address negotiation network packets includes Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) packets and Address Resolution Protocol (ARP) packets.

16. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said second types of said network packets comprises a proprietary protocol packet.

17. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said second types of said network packets comprise imaging data.

18. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein when said data channel is not owned, then determining whether to place said shared imaging apparatus in an automatic Internet Protocol (IP) address negotiation state, and if said shared imaging apparatus is placed in said

automatic IP address negotiation state, then attempting to automatically renew a current IP address for said shared imaging apparatus.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein said renewal of said current IP address is accomplished using a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP).

20. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein when said shared imaging apparatus is in an idle state, then determining whether to place said shared imaging apparatus in an automatic Internet Protocol (IP) address negotiation state, and if said shared imaging apparatus is placed in said automatic IP address negotiation state, then attempting to automatically assign an IP address for said shared imaging apparatus.

21. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein when said shared imaging apparatus is in an imaging state said networking hardware accepts said second types of network packets on said data channel only from said user that owns said data channel.

22. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein when said shared imaging apparatus is in an imaging state, said networking hardware disregards all said automatic IP address negotiation network packets and all imaging data packets received from any user that does not own said data channel.